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The Home of Expatriate
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Interpersonal Affect and Host Country National Support of Expatriates: An Investigation in China

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Interpersonal Affect and Host Country National Support of Expatriates: An Investigation in China

Introduction

In their comprehensive review of critical issues in global mobility, Caligiuri and Bonache (2015) note that “the host national perspective is not homogeneous and one that warrants further investigation.” Indeed, the importance of the host country national (HCN) to the expatriate experience cannot be overstated. HCNs can be of immense help to expatriates as they can provide critical information, both about the workplace, as well as living in the country (see, e.g., Adkins & Naumann, 2001; Kawai & Mohr, 2015). In the workplace, HCNs can help expatriates by providing them information about the do’s and don’ts, as well as share the unwritten rules of the workplace, thereby saving the expatriates time and effort, and helping them adjust faster. In a similar vein, HCNs can help expatriates with important information about living in the country. Moving to a new country can be quite stressful for the expatriates – from wondering about the right neighborhoods to live in, to identifying schools for their children, there is a long, unending, list of activities that any person moving to a new city/country must perform. As Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, and Shin (2010) have noted, expatriates are often forced to form “network ties” to gain critical information and receive emotional support. Once again, this is where HCNs come in – they can help the expatriates’ adjustment and socialization by sharing information and providing support.

Not surprisingly, over the years, several scholars (see, e.g., Toh & DeNisi, 2005; 2007) have called for multi-faceted investigations of the role played by HCNs in the expatriate adjustment, as this support can be invaluable to expatriates and can

have a significant impact on the expatriate's performance and overall experience (see, e.g., Arman & Aycan, 2013; Takeuchi 2010). In this connection, Varma and his colleagues (see, e.g., Varma Aycan, Budhwar, Pichler, Uygur, & Paluch, 2016, for a summary), have conducted several investigations to try and understand the factors that help guide HCN willingness to offer role information and social support to expatriates. In their studies, Varma and his colleagues found that HCNs tend to categorize expatriates into in-groups and/or out-groups, and this categorization is what determines whether HCNs offer required support and information to expatriates. Given that these studies were conducted in several different countries (e.g., China, India, Turkey, UAE, United Kingdom, USA), it is interesting to note that HCN reactions to expatriates seem to have a common thread running through – expatriates are broadly categorized as 'in-group' or 'out-group' and this categorization determines the degree to which HCNs are likely to help them. Further, the degree of categorization depends on a number of key variables, such as (i) the level of collectivism and/or ethnocentrism in the country, (ii) the degree to which HCNs perceive expatriates as having similar values, (iii) whether or not HCNs like the expatriate. In this paper, we concentrate on studying the role that liking (interpersonal affect) could potentially play in the HCN – expatriate interaction, since it is known that interpersonal affect is a complex emotion (Tsui & Barry, 1986), often expressed in a spontaneous and instinctive manner (Zajonc, 1980). Further, given that interpersonal affect forms the core of interpersonal relationships (Zajonc, 1980), it is clear that expatriates who are liked by HCNs are more likely to receive assistance from HCNs, than those who are not liked, or liked less.

In order to test this, we conducted an empirical investigation (a between-subjects study) whereby we examined if Chinese HCNs would offer role information and social support to expatriates from India and the U.S. and the degree to which the HCNs' (i) own collectivism and (ii) the interpersonal affect felt towards the expatriates guided the decision to support expatriates. We next present a brief description of China -- the host country for our investigation -- and we also discuss collectivism, an essential cultural feature of the country.

The Chinese Context and Collectivism

For almost three decades now, multinational corporations (MNCs) have continued to invest in, and increase, their operations in China, partly due to the vast market potential that it offers to MNCs (Boyatzis, 1982), and the large population, which offers cheap labor. Further, during this period, the move from a rural and agrarian setup to a market-driven industrialized economy has made China an important destination for business ventures (see, e.g., Varma et al., 2011a; Wong & Slater, 2002), and is seen as a major player in the global economy. As early as 1992, the Beijing Review reported that there were nearly 20,000 joint ventures, including MNCs, in China, and by 2000, there were 340,000 approved foreign enterprises in China, with a utilized capital in excess of US\$ 312 billion (Tung & Worm, 2001). As a logical outcome of substantial FDI (foreign direct investment), China has emerged as a leading host country for expatriate assignments. At the same time, China is often viewed as the country where expatriates face major difficulties in adjusting and operating (*Global Relocation Trends 2003/2004 Survey Report*).

Clearly, the issues faced by expatriates in China stem from the differences in the culture between expatriates' home countries and China. For example, several

Chinese social traditions, such as collectivism (e.g., Woodhams, Xian, & Lupton, 2015) and *guanxi* make it difficult for expatriates from other cultures to adjust to the Chinese environment (Tung & Worm, 2001; Varma, Budhwar, & Pichler, 2011a). The impact of Confucian value systems such as conformity, collectivism, large power distance, emphasis on harmonious interpersonal relationships, and interpersonal trust, on the Chinese culture and ethos (Chew and Lim, 1995) make it difficult for outsiders to be accepted into social circles, and are also likely to have a strong influence on workplace interactions. So, for example, the twin values of conformity and harmonious personal relationships make it important that everyone attempt to behave similarly, so as not to stand out, while at the same time avoiding confrontation. For an expatriate from a different culture, these expectations might prove somewhat difficult to fulfil. Relatedly, several scholars have noted that Chinese society is highly collectivistic (see, e.g. Pan & Zhang, 2004; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001), and its members thus exhibit a powerful sense of group membership, whereby people distinguish between in-group and out-group members. In other words, people in collectivistic societies rely, in general, upon their in-group members (i.e., other Chinese HCNs) in exchange for absolute devotion to them, while interaction with out-group members (i.e., expatriates from India or USA) is to be minimized. Here, collectivism is manifested through a deep sense of liking for those who belong to the same social environment (Lockett, 1988) and share the same values, and these values, in turn, guide HCNs' behavior towards expatriates (Varma, Pichler & Budhwar, 2011b).

It should be noted that this drive to categorize others as in-group or out-group is primarily driven by a desire for harmony. Individuals often believe that harmony is

much easily attained with individuals who are similar, and prefer to form relationships with such individuals. Triandis (1994) describes such individuals as “collectivists”, whose primary motivation is interdependence, ingroup embeddedness, duty, and personalized relationships. Such individuals tend to derive their self-identity from the group rather than their own individuality. In general, collectivists care greatly about the welfare of the group and will place group interests above personal interests, even if it means that their own desires and needs are compromised (Wagner & Moch, 1986; Ohana, 2015). As a result, they make relatively clear distinctions between ingroups and outgroups (Earley, 1989; Hofstede, 1980) and tend to behave consistently with such distinctions (Wagner, 1995). However, while it might be cognitively convenient to believe that collectivists simply base their identities on the ethnic background of the other individuals, the relationship seems to be more complex, and deserves further discussion.

First, as Chinese society has opened up and begun interaction with the outside world over the last twenty plus years, a new generation of “collectivists” has emerged, whose identify is not solely defined by their ethnicity, but also by their associations. In this connection, Varma et al. (2009) found that Chinese HCNs did make a distinction between expatriates from different countries, and were more likely to provide role information and social support to expatriates from India, as compared to those from the USA, due to perceived cultural similarity. Thus, while a society may, overall, be categorized as “collectivistic,” it should be borne in mind that collectivism may manifest itself in different ways within that society. In the case of China, the newer generation is more likely to identify with their workplace colleagues, rather than simply identifying with other members they interact with in their day to day

lives. This, we believe, would be especially true for those HCNs who work in global organizations, where they are likely to interact with people from different countries on a regular basis, both inside and outside the workplace. Here, the HCNs' identity would be more likely defined by association rather than simply by national origin. In this connection, Rhee, Uleman, and Lee (1996; p. 1038) have discussed an issue of critical importance and relevance, pointing out that "coworkers may be considered as in-group in one culture or context and an out-group in another." In other words, all individuals in one society are not likely to behave the same way, when it comes to certain traits that are ascribed to that society. Accordingly, as it relates to collectivism, Chinese HCNs in the current generation, and especially those that work in multi-national organizations, are likely to include expatriates into their in-groups, and feel affect towards them due to shared goals and work roles. This is all the more true for HCNs in China – as noted by Ho and Chiu (1994) who had argued that the Chinese people's collectivism was derived from specific relationships they formed with others, and could not be generalized based on generalized definitions of societal traits. Here, we believe that the expatriate's personal traits and characteristics are more likely to determine whether they are able to induce the collectivistic tendencies of the HCN. Indeed, the Varma et al. (2009) study reported that many of their participants felt a closer bond with Indian expatriates due to their shared Buddhist heritage. Similarly, Varma et al. (2011) have reported the importance of perceived values similarity in HCNs' decision to include expatriates into their in-group. Thus, we believe that when HCNs feel a special bond with the expatriate, as described above, they are more likely to include them in their in-groups, and develop a liking for them.

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We next discuss the importance of HCN reactions and support to the expatriate experience, both in and out of the workplace.

The importance of the HCN-Expatriate relationship

As we note above, HCNs can help expatriates adjust to their new location by sharing valuable information about what is expected from the expatriate in the organization (i.e., role information), as well as helping them find their way in the new city/country (i.e., social support). As many scholars have noted, HCN willingness to share information and support expatriates can go a long way in helping them adjust to the new location, since expatriates often do not have established social support networks in the host country. Clearly, the right support would help expatriates adjust to the new location and perform their tasks more effectively (Toh & DeNisi, 2007; Varma, Toh & Budhwar, 2006). As Toh and DeNisi (2003, 2007) have noted, HCNs can serve as vital assets to expatriates given their in-depth knowledge about the expatriate’s role, and their ability to provide social support at work and beyond, by virtue of their knowledge of the host country’s society and culture.

In this connection, Vance, Vaiman, and Andersen (2009) have argued that HCNs can play a critically important liaison role in multi-national corporations’ knowledge management. These authors suggested that HCNs, especially those working closely with expatriates, can play the liaison role in five very important ways. While these authors emphasize the macro level impact of HCNs’ liaison role, we draw upon their model to make a case that HCNs liaison role(s) can also have a direct impact on individual expatriates. Accordingly, we next discuss each of their five constructs as these relate to the HCN – expatriate interaction.

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3 First, HCNs can serve as cultural interpreters, by helping the expatriate make
4 sense of the new culture, and all its nuances. So, for example, HCNs can help
5 interpret cultural clues, as well as help the expatriate understand language differences.
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7 Next, HCNs can play the role of communication facilitator, by helping expatriates
8 communicate with other HCNs, both in verbal and non-verbal manner. Third, HCNs
9 can help expatriates by playing the role of information resource broker. As a new
10 arrival at the location, an expatriate would need whole host of information, from
11 formal rules, to informal practices, and organizational history. Most of this
12 information is not typically stored in a single location or available with a single
13 individual, and even if it was, he or she may not be willing to share it. This is where
14 the HCN's role becomes critical, as he/she would be better placed and probably better
15 suited to identifying the repository of the information needed, and to drawing it out of
16 the individual. Next, HCNs can play the role of talent developer (Vance et al., 2009),
17 as they can help expatriates adjust, and thus perform, better. This could be done
18 through formal channels if the HCN is asked by the local leader to play mentor to the
19 expatriate – though, in most cases, it is the informal interaction between the two that
20 would help the expatriate's professional growth. Finally, HCNs can play the role of
21 change partner, by being available as a sounding board, and offering advice as
22 needed, as the expatriate goes through myriad experiences at the new location.
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46 By now, it should be clear that, in order to succeed on the assignment and
47 adjust to the new culture, expatriates must connect with HCNs (Takeuchi 2010).
48 However, while gaining access to relevant role information and procuring timely
49 social support may sound easy to do, the fact is that expatriates should not
50 underestimate the complexity involved in establishing trusting relationships before
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they can receive any assistance from HCNs. Similarly, expatriates should not automatically assume that HCNs would be ready and willing to provide them the required information and support. It is important that expatriates recognize that HCNs categorize expatriates into in-group or out-group members and that it is this categorization that determines the degree and likelihood of assistance being offered to expatriates (Fisher, 1985). As we noted earlier, HCNs will typically share role information with, and offer social support to, *only* those expatriates whom they like (see, e.g., Varma, et al., 2011b). The other expatriates may be left out of the information circle, either due to their gender and/or national origin, or simply the fact that they are expatriates, which is quite problematic, as all expatriates need role information and social support to successfully adjust to the new location.

Importance of Role Information and Social Support

Role information (Louis, 1980) refers to information about the job, the local office, the organization, and behaviors that might be considered appropriate (or, inappropriate) in the workplace. Clearly, every employee could benefit from such information, as such information can act as a road map for expected and accepted behaviors. However, in the case of expatriates, such information (or the lack thereof) can be even more critical – after all, in addition to being in a new country and dealing with a new culture, the expatriate is also expected to follow local work norms. For example, if the local practice is to take a short lunch break, and continue to work over the lunch break, an expatriate who is used to taking long lunches that are deemed “work-free zones”, would have to adapt and adopt the local practices. Of course, it is the more subtle practices that one could really use help with – for example, if the norm at the new location is that everyone speaks up at meetings, but the real decision

is made by the leader later, then an expatriate who is used to decisions being made by consensus, would have trouble and experience cognitive dissonance.

This is where HCNs can be extremely useful – first, they can draw upon their own experiences, provide critical information and resources to expatriates (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). Next, HCNs can also help expatriates avoid potential pitfalls by sharing their knowledge and expectations (Caligiuri, 2000). In this manner, HCNs can help expatriates perform their jobs more effectively by helping to reduce the sense of uneasiness and discomfort experienced by expatriates (Shay & Baack, 2006). Clearly, HCNs' assistance can contribute to expatriates' positive adjustment and improved performance on the job (Olsen & Martins, 2009; Shay & Baack, 2006). As Varma et al., (2011a) have argued, HCNs are best suited to serve as the "best source" for expatriates to obtain role information. However, it should not be assumed that HCNs would automatically be willing to share information with expatriates. In this connection, Caligiuri (2000) reported that casual interaction between expatriates and HCNs may not be enough of a trigger for the HCN to share role information or cultural insights. Instead, as we noted earlier, it has been argued that HCNs would be likely to share information only with expatriates toward whom they experience high interpersonal affect – in other words, expatriates they like (Varma et al., 2009; Varma et al., 2011b).

In addition to role information, expatriates need support outside the workplace as they make their way through the maze of the new country, the new city, and new surroundings. As they embark on their new assignments, expatriates are often forced to leave behind a social support network (van Bakel, Gerritsen, & van Oudenhoven, 2011), that could be relied upon as and when needed. Instead they must now attempt

to build a new social network in a new land, and attempt to acquire routine information such as the location of the local supermarket, the dry cleaners, or the post office, etc., (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). Clearly, for expatriates, acquiring critical information requires knowing at least one (and, preferably more) HCN that they can call on, for help with understanding their new surroundings. This is where they need social support, which involves building relationships with HCNs who can play different roles – be a colleague and provide professional insight, be a friend and provide emotional support, and be an advisor to the expatriate when he/she is dealing with new and/or difficult situations in the host country (Adkins & Naumann, 2001; Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Of course, in order to receive social support from HCNs, expatriates must get HCNs to like them. Clearly, this is easier said than done -- individuals from different cultures often tend to misunderstand each other because of the embedded knowledge of home country culture, customs and practices (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) that each party exhibits. The flipside of this is that when expatriates do receive social support from HCNs, it makes them feel liked, and reduces the anxiety they feel in connection with relocating and living in a new country (Fisher, 1985; Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987). Given the importance of HCN liking of expatriates, we now briefly review the literature on liking – also known as interpersonal affect.

Interpersonal Affect

According to Zajonc (1980), affect is an involuntary reaction that constitutes the core of interpersonal relationships and can be described as a ‘like-dislike reaction’ (Zajonc, 1980). In other words, individuals often react instinctively on meeting someone, and almost immediately decide whether or not they ‘like’ the other person.

In this connection, research (see Lefkowitz, 2000, for a detailed review) confirms that interpersonal affect guides individual behaviors towards other individuals. Thus, if people “like” someone, they are likely to engage with, and befriend, the individual. Furthermore, in such situations, individuals have also been known to want to work with the individual(s) they like (see Tsui & Gutek, 1984), and are likely to offer assistance to him/her if needed. Conversely, when people do not like another individual, they are not likely to want to engage with them or help them.

Clearly, in the case of expatriates, if HCNs “like” them, they are much more likely to receive the required support as opposed to when HCNs don’t like them, or even when they are indifferent. In this connection, Tsui, Egan and O’Reilly (1992) have noted further that when an individual is not liked in the workplace, he/she is less likely to engage with others, and would most likely perform below expectations. In the case of HCNs and expatriates, the absence of positive interpersonal affect is likely to have a negative impact on the expatriate’s adjustment, as well as performance. As discussed above, individuals identify and categorize themselves and others into groups based on similarities and/or dissimilarities. As George and Chattopadhyay (2002) noted, individuals gravitate towards similar others because of shared characteristics and/or values (Varma et al., 2011a), since sharing characteristics and/or values with group members also creates a comfortable environment and helps in empowerment (see Fong & Snape, 2015).

Based on the above discussion, we predict:

Hypotheses

- H1. Chinese HCNs’ collectivism will be positively related to their interpersonal affect towards their expatriate co-workers (Varma et al., 2009).
- H2. Chinese HCNs’ interpersonal affect will be positively related to their willingness to provide role information to expatriates.
- H3. Chinese HCNs’ interpersonal affect towards expatriates will be positively related to their willingness to provide social support to expatriates (Varma et al., 2009).
- H4. Chinese HCNs’ level of collectivism is contingent on their personal characteristics (e.g. previous experience working with expatriates).
- H5. Role information and social support, being provided by Chinese HCNs, are contingent on the personal characteristics of the potential expatriate co-workers (Varma et al., 2012) – e.g., country of origin, and gender of expatriate.

Method

Sample

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from 402 front-line, junior level professionals in 4 global organizations operating in China. The participants were provided with a survey in two sections. In the first section, we asked for their demographic information (age, gender, etc.), and asked them to respond to questions about their level of collectivism. In addition, we included questions about how long they had worked in multinational corporations, how long they had worked closely with expatriates, and how often they socialized with expatriates. The second section provided them basic information about a potential expatriate co-worker, who was presented as being from India, or the U.S.A., and either male or female. In terms of

the profile of the expatriate co-worker, we provided information about his/her education (Bachelor's degree); number of years of experience (5 years); country of origin (India or USA); and ethnicity (Asian vs. Caucasian). The participants were asked to read the profile of the potential co-worker and keep him/her in mind, as they responded to questions about "felt interpersonal affect" towards the expatriate, and their willingness to offer role information and social support to the expatriate. In terms of the break-up, 45.5 percent of the participants received a survey where the potential expatriate co-worker was male, while 50.5 percent received a survey version where the potential expatriate co-worker was from the USA.

Of the 402 participants, 44 percent were male and 56 percent were female, and their average age was 25.1 years. They had an average of four years of full-time work experience, while 51 percent of them had worked closely with expatriates and 32 percent had some interaction with expatriates. On average, they had worked with expatriates for roughly 3.1 years. In terms of participation from the four organizations, we had 125 participants from organization 1, 98 from organization 2, 90 from organization 3 and 89 from organization 4. Broken down by function, our participants represented the various functional units, as follows – 44% came from Sales/Marketing; 32% came from Accounting/Finance; 14 % came from Product Development, and 10% from Public Relations/Administration/Human Resources.

Next, while the participants were drawn from multi-national organizations, and were known to be fairly conversant in both written and spoken English, we administered a Chinese version of our survey instrument, to eliminate any potential bias due to participants' English language ability. Further, to ensure that the terms used in the English version of the questionnaire had equivalent terms in Chinese, we

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used the “independent back-translation” method suggested by Brislin (1980). As such, the survey was first translated into Chinese, and then back to English, by two different individuals who were both proficient in both languages, but were not associated with this study.

Finally, in order to ensure that there were no systematic differences between the different parts of our sample, we tested the sample using the chi-square association test. In particular by considering all combinations of the participant controls with the potential co-worker controls we found that the values of the Pearson’s two-sided asymptotic chi-square ranged from 0.057 to 0.762, indicating that there was no systematic association between the types of controls in the sample (Mellahi & Harris, 2016).

Measures

Collectivism (alpha = .84) was measured with a five-item construct adapted from Clugston et al. (2000). Participants indicated, on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, the extent to which they perceived the importance of group welfare against individual benefits and gains. The construct included items such as “Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.”

Interpersonal affect was measured with a three-item construct adapted from Tsui and Barry (1986). The items were measured on a seven-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, and included statements such as “I would like to spend time with this person.” The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .79.

Role information (alpha = .85) was measured through a five-item construct rated on a seven-point scale, regarding the extent to which HCNs would be willing to provide the five different types of role information identified by Morrison (1993). The

items were measured on a seven-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The construct included items such as “I would be willing to provide the expatriate with information on the behaviors and attitudes that our organization values and expects.”

Social support was measured through a five-item construct adapted from Caplan et al. (1980) assessing the extent to which the HCNs would be willing to provide support to the expatriate outside of the workplace. The items were measured on a seven-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The construct included items such as “I would listen to the expatriate’s personal problems if approached” and the Cronbach alpha for this scale was .78.

In order to rule out alternative explanations of the findings (Turnley and Feldman, 2000), we included appropriate control variables in our analyses. Specifically, with respect to the expatriate co-worker we used *gender* (male = 0; female = 1) and *country of origin* of expatriate co-worker (0= U.S.; 1 = India). With respect to respondents, we used *gender* (male = 0; female = 1), *age*, *total work experience* (in years), whether they had *worked with expatriates* previously (0 = yes; 1 = no), previous *interaction* with expatriates (0 = yes; 1 = no), and number of years having *worked with* expatriates.

Consistency of the survey instrument

Construct internal consistency was investigated by evaluating the computed Cronbach (1951) alphas. As Nunnally (1978) noted, a survey instrument is considered reliable for testing a model when Cronbach alphas are much higher than 0.70. As reported above, the alphas in the present study ranged between 0.784 and 0.847, thus meeting this threshold.

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Construct validity was examined by evaluating the percentage of the total variance explained per dimension obtained by applying confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each construct. In case where the percentage of total variance explained values are higher than 50.0% a survey instrument is acceptable in terms of construct validity (Hair *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, construct validity was also examined by evaluating the average variance extracted (AVE) per dimension obtained by applying CFA (Smith *et al.*, 1996). If the AVE values are higher than 0.50, then the survey instrument construct validity is acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2008).

Construct discriminant validity was assessed by examining whether the correlation coefficients between pairs of constructs were significantly different from unity (Gefen *et al.*, 2000), and by examining whether the square root of each factor's AVE is larger than its correlations with other factors (Chin, 1998; Gefen & Straub, 2005; Straub *et al.*, 2004). Fulfillment of these conditions in our study provided evidence for separate constructs.

Common method bias

Since all our data were collected from participants at the same point in time, and through a single instrument, our study potentially suffers from common method bias. In order to address this issue, we drew on the recommendations of Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) to try and minimize such bias. First, we made every effort to ensure that the participants were convinced of the anonymity of their responses by clearly detailing this in bold on the cover sheet of the questionnaire. Next, the questionnaires were distributed to the individual participants through our contacts at the different organizations, and they were allowed to mail these back to an independent individual not connected with the study. In addition, we also noted very clearly that all data

would be combined for analytical purposes and that individual responses would never be analyzed or discussed.

Statistical analysis

To test our hypotheses, we used '*structural equation models*' (SEM), via AMOS, and the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). SEM is effective when testing models that are path analytic with mediating variables, and include latent constructs that are being measured with multiple items (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2004). Furthermore, MLE was selected as this method is robust even in cases where the assumption of normality is violated (Hair et al., 2008).

We assessed the overall model fit following Bollen's (1989) recommendation to examine multiple indices, since it is possible for a model to be adequate on one fit index but inadequate on many others (Katou et al., 2014). We used the chi-square test (with a critical significance level $p > 0.05$) and the normed-chi-square ratio (with critical levels 1–3, 3–5, and 5–7 for very large samples and high correlations, to indicate excellent, good, or mediocre fit, respectively) (Pedhazur & Pedhazur-Schelkin, 1991); the goodness of fit index, or GFI (with a critical level not lower than 0.80, or 0.70 for complex models) (Judge and Hulin, 1993); the normed fit index, or NFI (with a critical level not lower than 0.90) (Bentler and Bonett, 1980); the comparative fit index, or CFI (with a critical level not lower than 0.90) (Bentler, 1990); the root mean square error of approximation, or RMSEA (with critical levels not more than 0.05, 0.08, or 0.10 to indicate excellent, good, or mediocre fit, respectively) (Steiger, 1998); the incremental fit index, or IFI (with critical level not lower than 0.90) (Hair et al., 2008); and the Tucker-Lewis fit index, or TLI (with critical level not lower than 0.90) (Tucker and Lewis, 1973).

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Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

In Table 1, we report the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables used in estimation. In addition, we report the Cronbach alphas, the percentage of variance explained, and the AVE for all constructs used in our study. Additionally, Harman’s (1967) single factor test was used to examine the likelihood of common method bias threat (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Straub *et al.*, 2004; Malhotra *et al.*, 2006). According to this test, the simultaneous loading of all items in a factor analysis, revealed four factors, and not just one, with the first factor covering only 23.78 percent of total variance explained, indicating thus that the common method bias in the data was rather limited.

Insert Table 1 about here

However, as several authors have noted (e.g., Katou et al., 2014) results based on correlations, although interesting, may be misleading due to the interactions between several variables. Therefore, additional appropriate control variables should be included in estimation in order to avoid reporting (Boselie et al., 2005) inaccurate results. Accordingly, in order to isolate the possible links between the variables involved, the estimated path diagram for the proposed framework (Figure 1) should be obtained.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Measurement model

Our measurement model specified four correlated latent factors and 17 observed variables. As predicted, based on the theory and previous research, the confirmatory factor analysis for the full measurement model indicated that the model fit the data well: $\chi^2 = 367.034$, $df = 113$, $p = 0.000$, Normed $\chi^2 = 3.248$, RMSEA = 0.075, NFI = 0.900, GFI = 0.899, CFI = 0.928, IFI = 0.928, TLI = 0.913. We compared the fit of the proposed measurement model to an alternative, less restrictive, model with items representing role information and social support loading on a single factor, and the items representing collectivism and interpersonal affect on another single factor, and found that the fit of this model was poor: $\chi^2 = 1080.453$, $df = 120$, $p = 0.000$, Normed $\chi^2 = 9.004$, RMSEA = 0.141, NFI = 0.705, GFI = 0.731, CFI = 0.728, IFI = 0.729, TLI = 0.691. These results support the proposed factor structure of the constructs used in this study as well as their discriminant validity.

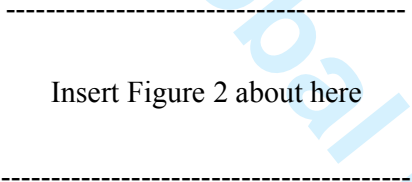
Structural equation modeling

In testing the operational framework presented in Figure 1, it should be noted that with respect to the controls, we linked all HCN controls with the constructs of collectivism and interpersonal affect, and we also linked all expatriate controls with the constructs of role information and social support. However, for further analyses, we only included the controls that proved to be significant.

We tested two models. First, we tested the partially mediated model (Baron & Kenny, 1986), as shown in Figure 1. Although the fit indices ($\chi^2 = 571.396$, $df = 182$, $p = 0.000$, Normed $\chi^2 = 3.140$, RMSEA = 0.073, NFI = 0.870, GFI = 0.880, CFI = 0.907, IFI = 0.907, TLI = 0.892) indicated that the model fits the data well, the direct

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links from the collectivism construct to the role information ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.844$) and social support ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.682$) constructs were not significant. Next, we tested the fully mediated model. The fit indices ($\chi^2 = 571.559$, $df = 184$, $p = 0.000$, Normed $\chi^2 = 3.106$, RMSEA = 0.072, NFI = 0.870, GFI = 0.880, CFI = 0.907, IFI = 0.908, TLI = 0.894) indicated that this model also fits the data well. Since these two models are not significantly different, we also tested for the mediation effect, whereby the indirect effect from collectivism to role information was found to be significant at $p = 0.066$, and the indirect effect from collectivism to social support significant at $p = 0.017$. Given these findings, we concluded that the fully mediated model explains our phenomenon, also supported by the Sobel (1982) test (see Figure 2 for the model). In figure 2, the circles represent the related latent variables and the bold arrows indicate the structural relationships between the corresponding variables. The numbers that are assigned to each arrow show the estimated standardized coefficients.



Hypothesis Testing

In this section, we summarize the major findings of our study with respect to the hypotheses developed. First, Chinese host country nationals’ collectivism positively influenced their interpersonal affect towards their expatriate co-workers, supporting Hypothesis 1. Next, Chinese HCNs’ interpersonal affect towards potential expatriate colleagues positively influenced their willingness to offer role information and social support to expatriate co-workers, thus supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3, respectively. Next, combining the fulfillment of Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, and the

statistical analysis presented in the previous section, we conclude that the interpersonal affect felt by Chinese HCNs mediates the relationship between the collectivism levels of Chinese HCNs, and their willingness to offer role information and social support to expatriates. In Figure 2, we see that only two of our controls (i.e., participant gender and participant interaction with expatriates) had significant impact on Chinese HCNs' collectivism, thus partially supporting Hypothesis 4. Similarly, we see in Figure 2 that only the country of origin of the expatriate significantly determines both role information and social support of expatriates, and the gender of the expatriate significantly determines social support, thus partially supporting Hypothesis 5. Specifically, considering the signs of these controls we find that Chinese host country nationals will be more likely to offer role information and social support to Indian expatriates than to expatriates from the US, and that Chinese HCNs, irrespective of their gender, will be more likely to offer social support to female expatriates than to male expatriates, replicating the results of Varma et al., (2011a).

Conclusions & Discussion

Over the last three decades, China has moved from being a closed, socialist, economy to becoming the world's second largest economy, and has often been referred to as the world's factory, given the country's role in manufacturing most of what the world consumes. A logical outcome of this growth has been that China now hosts more expatriates than any other country, except the USA (see, e.g., Bruning, Sonpar, & Wang, 2012), while also being one of the most difficult countries for expatriates to adjust. As such, it is critical that scholars continue to examine the factors that can help or hinder expatriate adjustment, so that organizations can better

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prepare their expatriates for their assignments, especially in China. We chose India and the USA as the home country of our potential expatriates, as both India and the USA are major economic players and do a lot of business with China. Interestingly, research has shown that expatriate nationality has a significant impact on HCN willingness to offer information and support (Bonache, Langinier, & Zárraga-Oberty, 2016). Thus, we would expect that Chinese HCNs would have significantly different reactions to expatriate colleagues from India, and those from the USA.

In terms of our findings, first -- as hypothesized, Chinese HCNs were more likely to offer to role information and social support to those expatriates that they liked than those they did not like (or felt ambivalent towards). Furthermore, we found that Chinese HCNs were more likely to offer role information and social support to Indian expatriates as compared to expatriates from the US. These results mirror earlier findings (see, e.g., Varma et al., 2011a), and are worthy of further discussion. As these authors have suggested, there is a possibility that Chinese HCNs think of Indians as culturally more similar to themselves, than expatriates from the U.S. This might put Indian expatriates at an advantage in terms of adjusting into the Chinese culture and receiving required information and support. However, it should be pointed out that in some East Asian cultures (e.g., South Korea and Japan), expatriates from the West are often seen as being more qualified and better informed than locals (Froese, 2010). While we did not specifically test for this in the present study, we do believe that such perceptions are most likely prevalent in China and, thus, expatriates from the USA might be able to take advantage of such perceptions and gain entry into Chinese HCNs' in-groups.

It should, of course, be noted that the new generation of Chinese HCNs, particularly those working in multinational organizations, where they interact closely with expatriates, are likely to experience and demonstrate a different type of collectivism – somewhat akin to the kin-non-kin definition offered by Rhee et al. (1996). In other words, the new “collectivist” may include demographically dissimilar individuals into his/her in-group where it makes more sense. Thus, a young Chinese HCN may have a “kin-based” in-group outside the workplace, and a non-kin based in-group in the workplace. This is an interesting proposition, and we hope that future research will study this more closely.

Another interesting finding of our study was the possibility that Chinese HCNs would be more likely to offer social support to female expatriates, as compared to male expatriates. We believe that multinational organizations should pay special attention to this finding – and perhaps ensure that qualified female candidates are given due consideration, as the low numbers of female expatriates being sent on assignment perhaps means that organizations are ignoring a critical part of their applicant pool (see Varma & Russell, 2016, for a detailed discussion).

Of course, the key finding of our study (noted above) is that Chinese HCNs would only offer role information and social support to those expatriates who evoke HCNs’ interpersonal affect – in other words, those whom they like. While it is obviously difficult for individuals to simply make others like them, there are a number of ways that they can increase the chances that others would like them. For example, expatriates could ensure that they learn about and demonstrate their awareness of relevant social, cultural and business practices (see Mezas & Scandura, 2005) of the host country. It is important to point out here that expatriates cannot expect that HCNs would change their values and behaviors to match those of expatriates.

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3 Instead, organizations should train their expatriates to understand and adopt local
4 cultural values and behaviors to ensure better chances of adjustment and performance
5 success (Fong & Snape, 2015). A word of caution here is warranted – as Froese,
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7 Pak, and Chong (2008) have noted, if the organization focuses their attempts on
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9 changing local organizational culture to accommodate expatriates, they are likely to
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11 evoke a negative response. On the other hand, expatriates who make the effort to
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13 adapt to, and learn about the local culture, are more likely to receive role information
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15 and social support, which is likely to prove very beneficial for the organization. As
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17 Olsen and Martins (2007) confirmed in their review, expatriates who receive social
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19 support from HCNs are significantly more likely to be better adjusted at their new
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21 location, and thus be more effective at their jobs. Accordingly, we recommend that
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23 multinational organizations develop programs that policies that emphasize the HCN -
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25 expatriate relationship (e.g., Shay & Baack, 2006), as this could have a significant
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27 positive impact on expatriate experience, which has been shown to have a strong
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29 relationship their overall job satisfaction (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011).
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37 *Limitations*

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39 In order for our findings to be understood in context, it is important that we
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41 acknowledge the limitations of the present study. First, as in many previous
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43 investigations, we tested our hypotheses using “paper-people” and subjective measure
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45 in our manipulations (Singh et al., 2016). We hope that future studies will examine
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47 HCN willingness to help expatriates by studying their reaction to real-life expatriates.
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49 Next, our study included participants who were successful professionals in multi-
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51 national organizations, and their opinions and reactions may not necessarily be
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53 generalizable to all Chinese nationals. Lastly, our manipulations only portrayed the
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expatriates as being from India or the U.S.A. – future studies should include other countries, so that the findings can have higher external validity.

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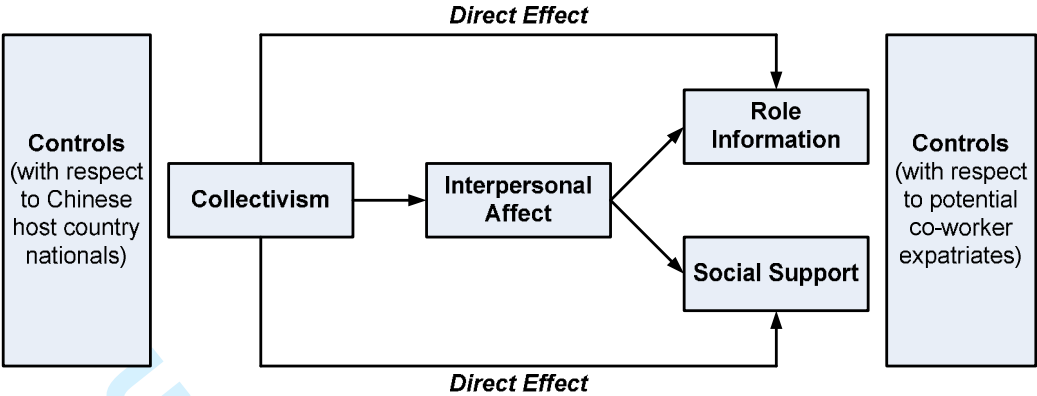


Figure 1: The study operational model

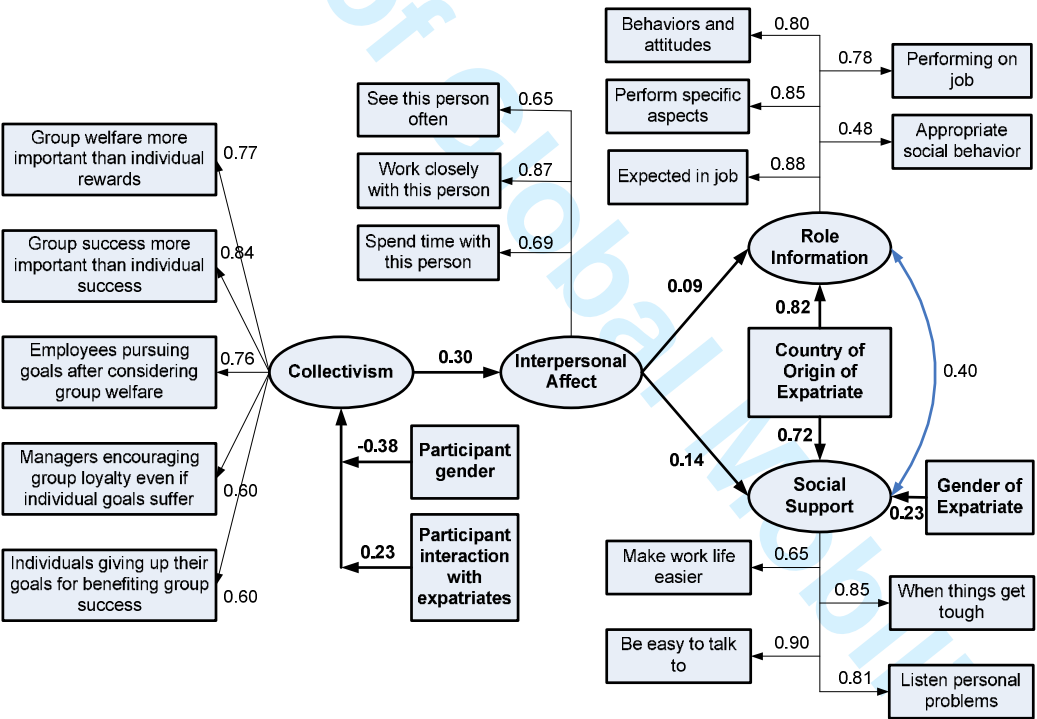


Figure 2: Results from the study mediation model

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients

	Mean (s.d.)	Cronbach Alpha	Percentage of variance explained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Respondent gender											
2. Respondent previous interaction with expatriates											
3. Expatriate gender											
4. Expatriate country of origin											
5. Collectivism	4.55 (1.13)	0.843	61.792	-0.343**	0.208**	0.032	-0.277**	[0.785] ⁺			
6. Interpersonal affect	4.73 (0.90)	0.787	70.254	-0.117*	0.072	0.030	-0.203**	0.262**	[0.837]		
7. Role information	3.68 (1.43)	0.847	65.778	0.069	-0.225**	-0.049	0.767**	-0.182**	-0.039	[0.804]	
8. Social support	4.37 (1.67)	0.784	72.799	0.066	-0.270**	-0.187**	0.655**	-0.131**	0.023	0.658**	[0.851]

* p < 0.05

** p < 0.01

⁺ Diagonal figures in brackets represent average variance extracted (AVE)